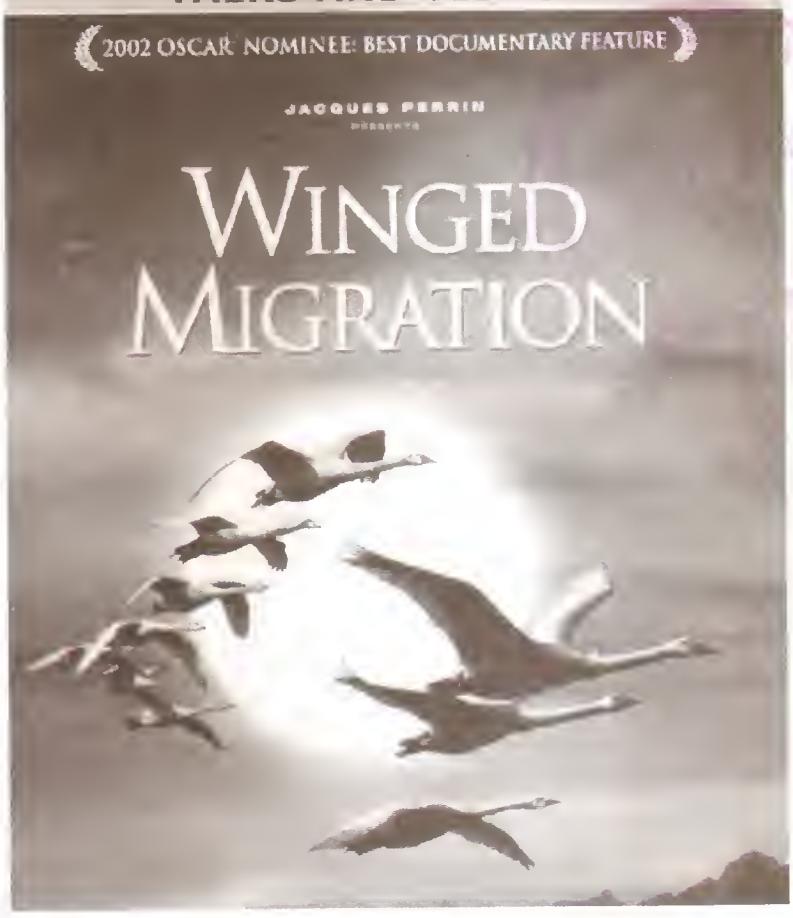
nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org February 05

TALKS AND VIDEOS



The perfect Valentine show

2002 ***Oscar Nominee:*** *Best Documentary Feature*

Winged Migration

Monday 14 February 05

6:30 p.m. *(89 mins)*

Louis Leakey Hall, Nairobi Museum

Tickets @ 300/- (350/-non members)

BOOK EARLY!

'Fly along with the world's most gorgeous birds' in a 'film of staggering beauty'.

The amazing cinematography follows bird migrations through 40 countries and across all the continents. It involved five crews (450+ people, 17 pilots and 14 cinematographers) .

FEBRUARY AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 5	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 12	Tree Walk
Feb 14	Winged Migration
Sun 20	Sunday Birdwalk
Sat 26	Mutomo Hill trip
Mon 28	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning

Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu

Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno

Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

FIELD OUTINGS

Mutomo Hill Plant Sanctuary

Saturday 26 February 05

Mutomo Hill is Kenya's only official plant sanctuary, established in 1960.

Mutomo town can be reached from the Mombasa road (left to Machakos, on to Kitui) or from Thika (off Garissa road and right to Kitui). Those from Thika meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Mobil Petrol Station on Garissa Road just before the left hand turnoff in to Thika town. Otherwise, meet at 10:30 a.m. at Kitui Tourist Hotel. Carry picnic lunch and strong shoes for climbing the hill (which is not difficult).

Organised by Succulenta EA please liaise with Sue Allan (890375) or Julia Glen (891065)

Annual General Meeting

of the Friends of Nairobi Arboretum

Saturday 12 March 05 at 11:00 a.m.

at the Old Forester s House, Nairobi Arboretum

TREES OF KENYA

TIM NOAD and ANN BIRNIE

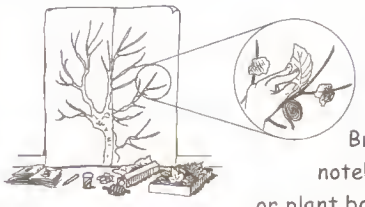
A fully illustrated field guide

© 1989 T. C Noad & A Birnie

With the permission of the publishers Nature Kenya can make available photocopies of this publication (which is out of print) on request. Please give two days notice by email office@naturekenya.org or phone for your copy.

Basic Botany for Beginners

with Ann Birnie



postponed to Sat 19 March 05

Nairobi Arboretum

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

1/2 day course on plant life and identification. Bring pen and notebook and any tree or plant book.

Book with 600/-, in advance, at the Nature Kenya front office. Minimum 15 pax

action

KENYA BIRDFINDER

Your records wanted...

Launch of Kenya Birdfinder

Wednesday 9 February 05, Natural Sciences Seminar Room, National Museums, Nairobi

Log on to the site www.worldbirds.org/kenya and come to this introduction

Programme

8:45 a.m. Wednesday Morning Birdwalk
For lunch bring your own picnic or visit the Museum cafeteria
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Presentation by Rachel Roberts from the Royal Society for the Protectionof Birds (RSPB) in Britain, discussions and launch

If you are a serious or casual birder or work with a tour company plan to participate.

On 7 & 8 February, a series of training sessions will be held for those involved in working with the system, which is open to all interested persons.

Kindly advise us *in advance* of your intended participation in the launch or training session or both, by calling Philista Malaki or Bernard Chege at the Department of Ornithology on 3742131 ext 243

FUNDAMENTALS OF ORNITHOLOGY

A Certificate course for bird guides and birders
Elsamere Field Studies Centre, Lake Naivasha
21– 28 April 05

This is a popular week-long course in field ornithology designed for amateur and professional bird guides and birdwatchers who want to improve their understanding of birds and their birding skills in the field. Teaching is through illustrated lectures, discussion sessions, group seminars, demonstrations and field practicals, in an informal environment. Participants completing the course to the satisfaction of the instructors receive a Certificate in Ornithology.

Fees and application:

Ksh 25,000 per person which includes full board accommodation, transport to and from Naivasha town, and during field outings, course materials and equipment.

Applicants must have some birding experience, at least KCSE level of education (a short CV required with application). A non-refundable deposit of 12,500/- must accompany applications (balance to be paid by 8 April). Please note that of the 18 places available, only 5 remain.

Applications and inquiries, should be addressed to: Anthony Kuria, Course Coordinator, at the Nature Kenya contacts or
email tba-africa@tropical-biology.org

Kenya Museum Society Evening Programme at Nairobi Museum, Louis Leakey Auditorium

Thursday 24th February, 2005, 6.30 pm

"THIRTY YEARS OF ART, CRAFTS, FASHION AND PHOTOGRAPHY"

Join authors **Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher** launching "Faces of Africa" book and internationally renowned ceramicist **Magdalene Odundo**, speaking about her background, her work and launching her book - "A Thirty Year Retrospective"

Books will be on sale during the launch.

INDIGENOUS TREES AND SHRUBS

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carole@access350.co.ke
OR JOANNA TRENCH 0733 603839
reforest@africaonline.co.ke

SUCCULENTA PLANT SALE

Kenton College
Saturday 2 April 05

Please start preparing and bagging plants now far the Kenya Horticultural Saciety Plant Sale! Please reserve space with Sue Allan 2(890375)

Bird Hotline

3749957

African Pitta *Langata, Nairabi/ Nov* Sophie
White Wagtail *Thika Sewage Ponds/ Jan* Sunday Birdwalk

(Please give your full name and details of location when reporting your bird sightings. Thank you!)

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EVENING SKY

By Ian Mackay

February Moon

2nd Feb *Last Quarter* rises at midnight; 9th Feb *New Moon* rises and sets with the sun; 16th Feb *First Quarter* overhead at sunset; 24th Feb *Full Moon* rises at sunset

February Stars

The evenings of February are full of interesting stars, and the skies generally clear until March or April when the rains usually start.

The pair of prominent bright stars just south of overhead are Sirius and Canopus. Sirius is the higher and brighter star.

The constellation of Orion is high in the sky. Look for three bright stars in a row and four bright stars forming a box shape around them. One corner of the box, to the southwest, is blue-green Rigel. The opposite corner, to the northeast is orange Betelgeuse. Orion may be used as a sky compass. When this constellation is overhead, imagine a line from Orion's "head" through the "belt", joining the bright star immediately below in the constellation Lepus. This line paints south. Remember that it can look a little different on paper!

The Pleiades are a cluster of stars above and to the right (northwest) of Orion. They are often called the Seven Sisters, although five are usually apparent.

Lower in the north is the constellation that the ancient Greeks named Auriga, the Charioteer. Auriga contains a very bright star, Capella. Arab astronomers called this star "the driver"' because it was seen before the sky became dark enaugh to show the fainter stars around it. It is not so easy to trace the shape of the Charioteer, but if one waits for those fainter stars to appear they will be seen to form a shape resembling an ancient helmet.

NATURALIST'S CORNER

POLLINATORS

By Dino Martins
email dinom@elci.org

Some of the hardest working members of society go about their daily tasks completely overlooked. However, should they stop working, things would quickly come to a halt. Farmers would have nothing to harvest, food industries would have nothing to process. Who are these essential, yet totally ignored workers in our midst? Airline staff and pilots, or perhaps doctors and nurses? The answer might surprise you.

The hardest working and least-appreciated workers in our world today are pollinators! Pollinators?! Yes, pollinators, in a stunningly diverse number of forms, work everyday, free of charge, just for us. They work throughout the year, without leave, and through all seasons, cold and wet or hot and dry. Pollinators are necessary to fertilise flowers, by transferring pollen, so that a plant can set fruit or produce seeds.

Pollinators across Africa take the form of insects, such as bees and butterflies, birds and even night-flying bats. The most familiar pollinator is the honeybee. However, few people are aware that there are thousands of species of bees other than the honeybee. Some of these, such as the carpenter bees, are the principal pollinators of horticultural crops, including export vegetables like eggplant (aubergine).

In fact, the eggplant flowers need a special kind of pollination in order to produce a crop. This is known as buzz-pollination. It involves the bee holding the flower in its mouth and vibrating it by buzzing its wings at a particular frequency. Only then is the pollen released! And, only certain bees, like the carpenter bee, can do this. Bees play an important role in the pollination of peas, sunflowers, beans, chillies, oranges and mangoes, to name just a few!

Coffee, one of East Africa's main cash crops for export, benefits from the presence of pollinating bees. There's also a growing body of evidence to show that the quality of coffee, as well as other crops, is far better when pollinated by insects.

One of the most interesting pollination processes comes from West Africa. The oil palm is widely grown throughout the western and central African tropics for its valuable oil-rich fruit. Oil palms are pollinated by a tiny beetle! When the palms were first introduced to other areas, they had to be laboriously pollinated by human hands. Then the beetles were introduced. They are far more efficient and yields on oil palm, when naturally pollinated, are even higher.

Yes, pollinators are at work everywhere. And we cannot do without them. Next time you take a bite from a juicy mango, or squeeze a lemon over a slice of papaya, or take a sip of that dark, delicious coffee, think of this: without a pollinator, hard at work somewhere, far, far away, there might be no mango, papaya, or, heaven forbid, much-needed morning cup of coffee!

regular activities

Up and about around the country

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

Organised by the Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust, nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **5 & 19 February, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse. Call Anthony Charo to confirm on 575207 or 0733 712406.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the Natianal Museum car park every Wednesday **at 8:45 a.m.** Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 20 February**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **12 & 28 February from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arbaretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Assaciation is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **5 February, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees naw apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday. For further details call 057 42952 or 0734 994938 or email lakevictoriasunsetbirders@yahoo.co.uk

Mt Kenya Biodiversity Conservation Group (MKBCG)

The MKBCG is a Nature Kenya Site Support Graup and organise bird walks to sites around Nara Moru every last Saturday of the month i.e. **26 February**. For more information contact 0722 364904, 0733 937115 ar 062 62071 Email: mt_kebio@yahoo.co.uk

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **19 February.** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

Plan your weekend or other break to stay at the Kinangop Guest House

Perched on the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views across the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussock-grass pasture, indigenous forest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is comfortable and fully furnished. Visitors can enjoy hikes and walks an the farm or go further afield with local guides.

For more informatian, brochure and non-member rates please cantact Nature Kenya.

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